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McConry, Jesse J.
Oakland Schools

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Oakland School Board Meeting, 15 July 1969

The major portion of this meeting was devoted to a presentation by a Dr. Smith who is in charge of Title VIII programs (Dropout Prevention) of the U.S. Office of Education. Dr. Smith and one member of his staff discussed some of the reasons for the rejection of the Oakland proposal. Among these were:

1. Lateness of submission--Oakland's proposal arrived on the last day of the review process;
2. Failure to meet at least two Guideline requirements (unspecified);
3. Poor articulation of the program components.

Dr. Smith implied that there were other problems but they were not specified. Also joining in this discussion was Merryl Powell from the Calif. State Dept. of Education. Both Powell and Smith made reference to the difficulties between the school system and the community, but it was observed that this relationship was now a kind of "lame-in".

Mr. Howard, of Social Dynamics, was also present at this session. His firm had assisted the community in developing the dropout proposal that was submitted. There was little visible reaction to the criticisms of his firm's efforts.

Dr. Smith, I believe, set out the O.E. position on community-school relations as far as Title 8 is concerned: USOE deals only with the Board. Other groups may participate in the Board's efforts as subcontractors, but there are apparently some limitations on such participation.

Interestingly, Dr. Powell indicated that the state's enthusiasm for Oakland cooled perceptibly during the time of its most severe troubles with the community in March. The Mason incident only served to harden the state's position. The USOE position seemed similar.

U.S.O.E. seemed to be saying to the Board that "we want to provide funds; just give us a proposal that is even minimally acceptable." The Board, I think, got the message.

After a short break the meeting resumed. The group gave its attention to more routine matters. There were brief reports on the state of the system's finances--poor. A slight surplus of funds over what had been previously estimated seemed likely. A small amount would be available from the community services tax (?), perhaps \$50,000. The Board anticipated a severe cut in funds for library books.

Two speakers appeared just prior to adjournment: Mr. Groulx, Exec. Sec'y of the Central Labor Council, Alameda County, speaking on behalf of the

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AFT/OFT. The Council was quite critical of the Board's consultants who were aiding in the search for a new superintendent. The Council also accused the Board of insensitivity to the community. Dr. Benbow's interim appointment was also condemned, and they asked the Board to rescind the appointment. Mr. Groulx suggested that the interim appointment was a facade which would cover Dr. Benbow's elevation to the permanent position. Groulx stated that the community had reason to doubt the Board's sincerity in its efforts to find a permanent superintendent.

Mr. Rose suggested that Groulx contact Dr. McPherson to discuss his grievances. Rose was sure that McPherson and the other consultants wanted to hear from all segments of the community. Groulx seemed reluctant to do this, but he did state that the Council should have a voice in the selection of the new superintendent.

Mr. Groulx was followed by the president of the OFT who more or less echoed Groulx. He did ask, however, for the termination of the consultant agreement and for full disclosure of the pay for the consultants and Dr. Benbow.

One Board member, Mr. Goady, was obviously disturbed and stated that he didn't understand the union's arguments. He said the Board was trying to do its best and trying to be fair in its search and selection procedures.

Several letters to a Board member were also read which supported the Board position on the afternoon meeting time. These were read without verbal comment.

The meeting closed without eulogy for Dr. Phillips which was led by Mr. Caughell.

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